

# THE RICHMOND STANDARD

## 42-unit complex 'catalyst' for North Richmond revitalization

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*Photo: Contra Costa County*

A 42-unit affordable apartment complex set to be built along a row of vacant lots on Fred Jackson Way in North Richmond is expected to be a catalyst for positive growth in the neighborhood.

Last month, the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors approved a final financing package for the \$27 million Heritage Point Development at 1500 Fred

Jackson Way. The supervisors approved selling several vacant parcels between Grove and Chesley avenues for the development.

The project by developer Community Housing Development Corporation will include groundfloor space for commercial and retail — possibly a small grocery store — and could break ground as early as spring.

The 42 units will serve families receiving rental assistance from Section 8 vouchers. Public outreach will be done to connect current North Richmond residents to the new units.

The development is hoped to be a catalyst for the revitalization of North Richmond's main corridor. It is set to be located on a site that once housed the Neighborhood House of North Richmond and other long-shuttered businesses.

"We've been planning for this site for more than 10 years," County Supervisor John Gioia said. "We've always believed this site is important to the future of North Richmond because it is right here in the downtown area."

Heritage Point is expected to add to some of the newer features along Fred Jackson Way, where the street median was transformed into a public space in the last decade. Recently, electrical power was made available to the median for public events. Located across the street from the project site are the Contra Costa Health Services' North Richmond Center for Health, the CHDC, the Community Heritage Senior Apartments and the county's Family Service Center.

"Having affordable housing brings people here, and having commercial like groceries, restaurant or other neighborhood-serving retail – a place where people can come for services or to eat – it sort of completes both sides of Fred Jackson Way," Gioia said. "I believe this will help jumpstart other activity, other real estate investment here in North Richmond."



The goal is to “create a central commercial core” along the main strip.

Joe Barrett, whose family has a long history in the area and still owns property there, said the Heritage Point project is “really needed.”

“This area has needed creativity,” Barrett said. “It needs to become a family-area again.”

Assembling funds for the project was daunting and complex and proved just how difficult it is to build affordable housing in the Bay Area, said Gioia.

“CHDC has worked very hard with the county to piece all the funding sources together,” Gioia said. “These projects don’t happen easily, they don’t happen overnight. We tried twice for cap-and-trade funding but were not awarded. But we were able to piece it together.”





Funding streams included a combination of county dollars, tax credits, Community Development Block Grant funds and other sources that were all individually crucial to realizing the project, Gioia said.

The development is a “drop in the bucket” for the state’s affordable housing needs, Gioia said.

“The financing challenges that existed for this project are part of the problem in getting affordable housing built in this state,” he said. “We’re happy, but it’s not going to solve the problem. We need a larger solution for affordable housing.”